

Local Political Participation in Europe: Elections and Referendums

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Since the 1970s, political protests have been growing in many democracies and the demand for political participation has become obvious. The 1990s also saw more open, dialogue-oriented participatory instruments (century of participation). The proliferation of participatory instruments in the field of talk-centric deliberative democracies is called the deliberative turn. Most new instruments of participation are implemented at the local level. However, it is argued that these instruments do not lead to binding decisions. Compared to elections, the number of citizens participating is rather small and selective. New forms of vote-centric direct democracy (referendums and other initiatives) are also implemented. The paper presents a model of offline and online participation with focus on representative and direct participation that can lead to binding de-

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cisions. Legal frameworks of different European countries are presented and compared. Is the turnout declining? Who is included and who is excluded? The article uses the analyses of the latest opinion polls survey data (World Value Survey).

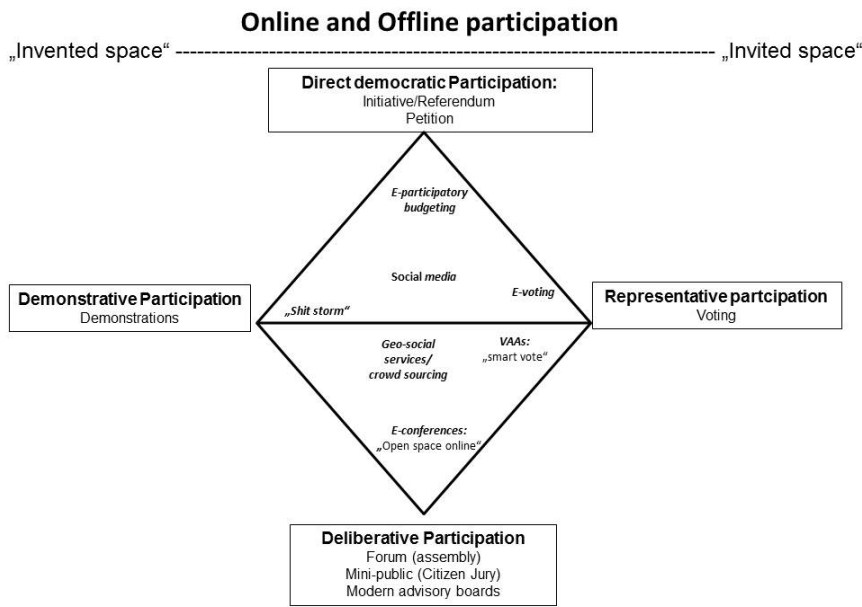
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1. A Conceptual Framework for Political Participation

Political participation is defined as an activity to influence political decision-making at the local, regional, and (supra-) national level. Not all forms of communal self-help, such as civil engagement, can be classified as political participation. The focus on the production of certain services often does not consider any kind of decision-making competencies. It is a kind of communal self-help and co-production that is not primarily oriented towards the influence of decision-making. This civic engagement, however, has an important social function especially when it comes to the development of social capital.

Political participation can be divided into four different political spheres – participation in representative democracy, participation in direct democracy, deliberative participation and demonstrative participation (see for details Kersting, 2013, 2014). These spheres are characterized by different intrinsic logics and specific online and offline participatory instruments. Thus, in the following part, online and offline instruments of political participation, as well as their main and collateral functions will be described using a model of participation with four spheres of participation.

Figure 1: Hybrid and blended participation



Source: Kersting 2012, 2013

The first sphere of participation is called demonstrative democracy. Individualism, societal change of values and political disenchantment lead to new forms of expressive participation, *inter alia*, political demonstrations, and wearing campaign batches. Online participations comprise civil society protests like shit storm and flash mobs (Della Porta, 2013). Demonstrations are locally realized, like in the case of Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Tahir Square in Cairo, and Maidan in Kiev. A look at the major issues of the demonstrations range from, *among others*, protests against the war, nuclear power, and austerity policies to local issues such as nuclear waste repository, or building of railway stations. While some of these demonstrations focus on national or international politics, it is obvious that the triggering effect is often related to local politics such as the building of a big shopping mall in Istanbul, the increase in local bus fares in Rio de Janeiro and the building of a new railway station in Stuttgart.

Protest against local project is smaller than national protest. In Stuttgart 2010, around 60,000 (official police data) and 150,000 (organizers' data) were on the streets against the building of a new railway station. This was

between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of Stuttgart's population. Even five years later after smaller demonstrations, a process of mediation, and a binding referendum a group still met at the railway to protest. Protest can be much bigger on the Internet. Online shit storms focus on local politics but more on individual websites or companies. These can mobilize around 1 million participants globally (Kersting, 2012).

Deliberative participation is by nature talk-centric. It has its origins in the deliberative turn in the last decade of the 20th century (Kersting, 2008, 2014: 62). There are three types of deliberative instruments. Open forums are based on self-selection of the participants. New representative mini publics (citizen juries) consist of groups which choose representative random samples out of the citizenship and use these participants for the discussion on certain political and planning issues. Stakeholder conferences encompass new modern forms of advisory boards representing particular interest groups such as youth parliaments or advisory boards for old people, for disabled or handicapped people or for foreigners and sub-municipal councils, to mention the most important. Deliberative instruments were positively influenced by local agenda processes in the 1990s. Participatory instruments such as participatory budgeting were developed in Porto Alegre in the new millennium, became popular in Brazil and Latin America and spread all over Europe and other continents (Diaz, 2014; Sintomer et al., 2008).

The rate of offline deliberative participation is generally small by nature. In Online participatory budgeting processes there are a couple of hundred participants. For example, in bigger cities there are up to 10,000 participants in the online participatory budgeting process (Kersting, 2012).

The following two spheres are not talk-centric, but vote-centric. Direct democratic and representative participation are part of the numeric democracy. This means that they are focusing on large numbers and representativeness. However, these are also included in the legal framework with certain controlled procedures, rules, and regulations regarding democratic principles like openness, transparency, control of power, as well as majority rules and minority rights.

The sphere of direct democracy participation is the third area of democratic involvement, which is issue oriented and vote-centric. Direct democracy participation is mainly used in the form of referenda and citizen initiatives which can produce binding decisions. There are other online and offline instruments that are vote centric and issue oriented such as opinion polls.

Representative participation, representation, and elections are a characteristic of modern liberal democracies. In modern liberal democracies all other forms of direct democratic instruments, deliberative instruments as well as demonstrative participation are secondary to representative democracy. Representative democracy is vote-centric based on elections. Online participation includes internet-voting or direct contact to politicians via e-mail or Facebook (Kersting, 2012: 17f; 2014: 66ff). Despite the fact that representative participation is faced with a severe crisis and is gradually declining, elections clearly remain the most important forum and have become an instrument of political participation.

2. Representative Participation at the Local Level

Representative participation is a dominant form of liberal democracies. European local governments are primarily based on the competition between political parties and political candidates. The institutions of representative democracy are formalized and enshrined in the constitution, local charters, and other legal frameworks. Representative democracy is characterized as numerical democracy where delegate trustees are chosen by a majority on one hand, while on the other hand, minorities' rights have to be protected. Representative participation encompasses other forms of participation, such as direct contact with the incumbents, membership in political parties, campaigning, and candidature for political mandates etc.

Most European countries are experiencing a decline in local elections voter turnout (see Dalton et al., 2003). With a few exceptions (for a long time France had a very high local voter turnout), voter turnout in local elections is mostly lower than at the national level (see Kersting et al., 2009). For example, during the last decade only 35 per cent and 60 per cent cast their votes at local elections in England and Germany respectively. Sweden holds national and local elections simultaneously and this leads to a higher turnout of 78 per cent. France is an exception because its voter turnout at the local level is around 69 per cent, which is even higher than that of national elections. The comparative study shows that regarding the electoral turnout there is no significant relationship between countries with different electoral systems (list proportional or FPTP), directly elected mayors, different terms of office/mandate etc. (see Table 1). However, electoral turnout is relatively high in some Eastern European countries with notable variations (see Romania, Poland).

Table 1: Local Elections and Referenda

Country	Population (Mio.)	Number of Municipalities	Council: Voting System	Term of Office	Voted at local election %	Mayor (in) direct Election/ Appointment	Term of Office	Recall	Referendum
Germany	82.6	12,366*	Cumulative and Panache, PR	4–5	62.8	Direct	6–8	Yes	Referendum/ Initiative
England	60.9	82	FPTP	5	35*	(Mostly) indirect	5	No	Referendum
Sweden	9.5	290	Open list PR	5	77.5	Indirect	5	No	Referendum
Netherlands	16.9	418	List Pro-portional	4	63.0	Indirect appointment	4	No	–
France	60.2	35,000	List Pro-portional	5	69*	Indirect	5	No	Referendum
Spain	46.6	8,117	List Pro-portional	4	61.9	Indirect	4	No	–
Slovakia	5.4	1,890	Majoritarian (Multi member districts)	4	53*	Direct	4	Yes	Referendum/ Initiative
Estonia	1.3	226	List Pro-portional	4	50.3	Indirect	4	No	–
Croatia	4.3	556	List Pro-portional	4	44*	Direct	4	No	–
Slovenia	2.1	211	List Pro-portional	4	51.6	Direct	4	Yes	Referendum/ Initiative
Poland	38.5	2,479	List Pro-portional	4	60.7	Direct	4	Yes	Referendum
Romania	19.9	3,181	List proportional	4	70.1	Direct	4	No	–

Source: For additional sources, see Kersting et al., 2009; CCRE 2012; World Value Survey, 2014

*Here real turnout at the last local election is used according to Statistical Offices. All other data on voter turnout are based on opinion polls from World Value Survey 2014 ('have done' etc.), because these data are used in the further detailed analysis of the voters.

It can be shown that certain groups are no longer motivated to cast their vote in national elections. The younger generation, migrants are absent in some countries. The strong relationship between social status, educational level, and income is obvious (Dalton, 2008). This is also the case for second order elections such as local government elections (see further details in Kersting et al., 2009). Marginalized groups are characterized by

a precarious social situation and, generally, lower education. This group is less active in participating in elections (s. Bertelsmann, 2013). Similarly, it can be shown that local elections turnout is lower because of different reasons. These are not only related to a lack of media coverage, but also to a lack of competencies, and weaker laymen candidates in these second order elections (see Kersting et al., 2009).

The following discussion will focus on providing deeper analysis of the groups which in the surveys claimed they 'will never vote at local elections'. Who is this group that would never vote at a local election? The analysis shows that the reasons for non-voting differ within the countries. In the following analysis France, England, Slovakia, and Croatia are not included because they were not part of this comparative survey (6th wave of the World Value Survey 2010-2014) or these data were not published.

The overall analysis confirms other studies that education and age are relevant aspects for voting behaviour and voter turnout (see e.g. Dalton, 2008). There is a strong positive relationship between political interest and voting. Citizens who have a higher interest in elections will not claim that they will never vote. The same applies to people who trust political institutions; here a combined index for trust in government, political parties, parliament, and administration is used. Members of clubs and associations are more likely to vote at local elections. Women are more likely to claim that they will never vote. Social trust is not significant when it comes to local elections. However, these overall results hide national differences. The logistic regression analysis shows that the models for individual European countries differ. In Germany and the Netherlands, the level of education is relevant to voting. Only in Germany and Romania the membership in clubs is related to voting in local elections. However, in all other countries there is no difference when it comes to voting and non-voting in the local elections. In all countries there is significant relationship between age and voting abstention. Younger age groups vote locally less frequently. Social trust is not relevant to local voting behaviour, but we can see that trust in institutions at the national level is significant in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Estonia. However, there is no significant correlation in the other countries. The most interesting is the educational level and voting. Only in Germany, the Netherlands and Romania high education is significantly related to voting in local elections and low education level to voter abstention. In all other countries non-voters at the local level have all educational degrees. Thus, even well-educated citizens claim that they will never vote in local elections. Meanwhile, in the first group of countries, electoral apathy predominates as a reason for non-

voting and non-voters are not interested because of a lack of knowledge. In all other countries there is also political cynicism. Well-educated and poorly-educated citizens are not interested in local elections.

Table 2: Electoral Abstention at Local Government Election Logistic Regression ('Would never do') Voting at Local Elections

	Full Model	GER	NED	SWE	ESP	POL	ROM	SLO	EST
(Intercept)	1.39 ^{***}	2.32 ^{***}	2.66 ^{***}	0.53	-0.92 [*]	0.61	-0.86	-0.72	0.97
	(0.18)	(0.34)	(0.37)	(0.57)	(0.46)	(0.57)	(0.61)	(0.48)	(0.66)
Secondary education	-0.53 ^{***}	-1.17 ^{***}	-0.76 ^{***}	-0.01	-0.03	-0.37	-1.44 [*]	0.33	-0.10
	(0.09)	(0.17)	(0.21)	(0.47)	(0.31)	(0.35)	(0.59)	(0.36)	(0.56)
Higher secondary education	-0.58 ^{***}	-0.96 ^{***}	-0.95 ^{**}	-0.20	0.01	-0.43	-0.69	0.43	-0.60
	(0.11)	(0.23)	(0.30)	(0.39)	(0.27)	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.50)	(0.56)
University education	-0.89 ^{***}	-1.54 ^{***}	-1.18 ^{***}	-0.53	0.02	-0.72	-1.55 ^{**}	0.54	-0.80
	(0.12)	(0.32)	(0.26)	(0.46)	(0.33)	(0.48)	(0.55)	(0.39)	(0.58)
Female	0.24 ^{***}	-0.02	0.18	0.21	0.13	0.55 [*]	-0.13	0.52 [*]	0.57 ^{***}
	(0.07)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.23)	(0.16)
Age centred	-0.04 ^{***}	-0.05 ^{***}	-0.04 ^{***}	-0.04 ^{***}	-0.06 ^{***}	-0.02 ^{**}	-0.04 ^{***}	-0.04 ^{***}	-0.02 ^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age centred squared	0.00 ^{***}	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 ^{***}	0.00 ^{***}	0.00	0.00 [*]	0.00 [*]
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Member sports/recreational club	-0.52 ^{***}	-1.09 ^{***}	-0.35 [*]	-0.25	-0.22	-0.43	0.12	-0.35	-0.30
	(0.08)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.26)	(0.31)	(0.42)	(0.43)	(0.26)	(0.23)
Political interest (Scale, 1–4)	-0.67 ^{***}	-0.58 ^{***}	-0.65 ^{***}	-0.80 ^{***}	-0.76 ^{***}	-0.64 ^{***}	-0.42 [*]	-0.76 ^{***}	-0.69 ^{***}
	(0.04)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.11)
Trust others yes	-0.11	0.10	-0.16	-0.16	-0.29	-0.18	0.09	0.04	-0.19
	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.35)	(0.51)	(0.29)	(0.17)
Institutional trust (Index, 1–4)	-0.49 ^{***}	-0.51 ^{***}	-0.81 ^{***}	-0.29	-0.01	-1.01 ^{***}	-0.46	-0.41	-0.46 ^{***}

	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.13)
AIC	6098.84	1224.74	1095.42	521.94	644.32	468.84	457.42	590.52	1050.74
BIC	6228.61	1285.44	1155.12	574.89	698.46	520.69	514.72	644.41	1108.26
Log Likelihood	-3031.42	-601.37	-536.71	-249.97	-311.16	-223.42	-217.71	-284.26	-514.37
Deviance	6184.31	1299.34	1073.42	501.26	636.52	448.63	425.08	568.52	1038.98
Num. obs.	9994	1842	1682	910	1014	824	1351	991	1380

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Logistic Regression. Dep. var.: Vote at local elections “would never do”. Standard errors in parentheses. Reference category education: No formal or only primary education. Reference category countries: Estonia. Weights applied. Education combined “complete” and “incomplete” categories. Trust index combines trust in government, political parties, parliament, and administration (one dimensional, high Cronbach’s Alpha). Source: WVS, 2010–2014

3. Direct Democratic Participation

Direct democracy encompasses instruments such as mandatory referenda, plebiscites, and initiatives (see Qvotrup, 2014). Mandatory referenda are more often held on constitutional reforms at the national level, whereas plebiscites or council referenda are frequently an element of opposition and oppositional parties. These are organized in a top-down manner within the parliament or initiated by the executive (by the mayor). Initiatives are an important element because they have agenda-setting functions and they have stronger effects on the political behaviour of politicians and the executive (Damocles’ sword). Referenda can be binding or consultatively determined by constitutions or electoral law. There are different defined legal settings such as quorums, time frames, and other legal requirements for direct democracy. In the following sub-chapter a brief overview will be presented. It focuses on legal settings of local direct democracy and on the reality of implementation.

Participation in direct democracy focuses on direct decision-making and on making thematic decisions directly, and not on the election of incumbents. Direct democracy is vote-centric. Direct democracy is *en vogue* at the national level but internationally. The legal base for referenda at the local level is to be found predominantly in European countries (and Northern America). In some European countries, direct initiatives, organized through a bottom-up approach, seem to boom at the local level (Schiller, Setälä, 2013; Qvotrup, 2014). In the 1990s, in many European

countries local referenda became part of the local Charters. However, particularly in Southern European countries, such as Portugal and Greece, as well as in some countries in Eastern Europe, such as in the Baltic region, referenda have not been well established yet. At the local level (as well as at the national level) Switzerland is one of the few countries that often use direct democracy instruments. With the exception of the agenda initiative (which exists and is used extensively in Poland), most direct democracy instruments lead to a ballot vote. Here it is important whether it is a binding or an advisory referendum. Consultative local referenda have been introduced in Italy, Sweden, Bulgaria, Norway, and Finland. Binding referenda exist in Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Poland as well as France, Lichtenstein, and Slovakia.

The legal framework for (local) direct democracy exists in a number of countries. However, the requirements to start referenda are sometimes very restrictive (Schiller, 2012). In countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, and Sweden (since 2010) requirements are liberal. Countries such as France, Lichtenstein, Slovakia, the Roman cantons in Switzerland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Norway, and Finland have very restrictive procedures to start a local referendum especially in bigger cities (see Schiller, 2012; Schiller, Setälä, 2013). It seems though, that binding referenda mostly have stronger restrictive thresholds and quorums.

Mandatory referenda are very rare at the local level. There are only a few mandatory referenda outside of Switzerland. Obligatory referenda at the local level exist in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom. These obligatory referenda are mostly connected to territorial reforms and mergers. In most other European countries referenda are facultative, which means organized top-down (by the mayor, the council) or bottom-up (by the citizen).

Plebiscites, which are initiated either by the mayor or by the municipal council, exist in few countries. In Finland and Norway and to a certain extent in Germany, municipal councils can start a referendum and councils use this instrument quite often.

Some scholars define the recall of the mayor as a form of an instrument of local direct democracy. In Europe, a recall can be found in Austria where it is initiated by the municipal council, and in Germany, Poland as well as in Slovakia where between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of the electorate can start the recall. With the introduction of direct election of mayors in some countries the recall was often introduced. Accordingly, the recall is also used at the local level in Uganda and Ethiopia.

In the Czech Republic, Germany, as well as in Italy, referenda were implemented to restrict party dominance. Citizen initiatives to initiate local referenda are possible in Germany, Austria, Finland, Switzerland, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. In countries such as Denmark, Finland, Norway, though, with the exception of Germany, there is almost no local binding initiative. The initiative implies an important veto function for civil society groups.

Countries with a strong parliamentary tradition are often hesitant to introduce local direct democracy instruments. Until recently, Sweden, United Kingdom, and Italy did not use consultative referenda. This changed with the introduction of advisory local referenda in Sweden and Italy, and the referenda on the direct election of mayors in the UK. In France, the legal regulation of local democracy was, until recently, strictly committed to the principle of representative democracy, which is historically and conceptually probably rooted in the Jacobinist doctrine that the sovereignty of the nation, as embodied in the national parliament, does not tolerate any rival source of decision-making. Furthermore, in practical and local power terms, mayors, politically well entrenched in *cumul de mandats*, were wary of local referenda as possibly challenging their local powers. The 1992 and 1995 local referenda, although merely consultative in nature, were allowed by national legislation. It was only in 2003 that binding referenda (referendums *décisionnels*) were finally adopted in national legislation, though with the proviso that the initiative for a local referendum lies solely with the local council.

Here there is no space to discuss the impact of local referenda, but it can be shown that with certain thresholds there is no inflation of referenda. With thematic exclusions some topics are not on the agenda, such as minority rights. In general, referenda are sometimes focused on a particular interest (not in my backyard initiatives), but can also be more conservative (against privatization), often focusing on fiscal austerity (against mega sport events, big infrastructural projects such as airports etc.) (Schiller, 2011; Qvotrup, 2014).

Voter turnout at referenda is extremely low and it is mostly lower than the turnout at local government elections. In the Czech Republic and Germany, it is in general below 50 per cent. In some cases it does not meet the obligatory quorums and participatory thresholds. However, Switzerland shows that at local referenda citizens have more possibilities to vote and fewer citizens are excluded from the elections and referenda (see Serdult, 2012). When it comes to representativeness in referenda,

social composition of the voters is regarded as similar to local government elections. Nevertheless, participation is generally lower and depends on the appeal of the topic. Local politics is less interesting to young people, but there are some exemptions because politics such as town planning or sustainability can attract a higher percentage of the younger generation.

4. Conclusions

In the last decade, a democratic innovation has become obvious (Smith, 2009). The possibilities for political participation are growing (Fung, Wright, 2003; Kersting et al., 2009). New information and communication technologies include online instruments often intermingling, interdependently in blended participation. Some of the online instruments are online imitations of existing offline instruments and in some cases they enhance the quality of offline instruments.

Democratic innovation at the local level includes new 'deliberative instruments' such as open forums, participatory budgeting, stakeholder conferences, and sub local councils (see Dryzek, 2002; Kersting, 2013). Deliberative democracy focuses on communication and community-building processes. It allows the development of social capital within the group. It forms part of the decision-making process and is important for agenda setting and the articulation of protest. However, because of the non-representativeness and the lack of legal requirements, its results are non-binding and consultative. The critique of deliberative democracy is often that it is mostly consultative.

In recent decades more direct democratic instruments have been implemented at the local level, such as local referenda and initiatives. These instruments of vote-centric numeric democracy are regulated (thematic exclusion, thresholds) and can lead to binding decisions. It can be shown that these often produce quite a few positive effects for local government (Sword of Damocles against excessive local government spending).

The analysis shows that despite a decline in voter turnout because of a lack of citizen duty (Dalton, 2008), local election and to a certain extent referenda are still by far the most popular participatory instruments. In most Eastern European countries, the voter turnout at the local level is relatively high. In Western Europe, local elections are becoming less attractive to marginalized groups (lower education and lower income) but this marginalization is even stronger in the majority of other participa-

tory deliberative instruments. Additionally, in Eastern Europe the better educated social groups are more cynical about politics and do not vote in local elections.

The invented space – and here in most countries direct democracy is included – is defined by constitutional and other legal frameworks and regulations. The new deliberative instruments are consultative and cannot lead to binding decisions. Exceptions can exist at the sub-local level and within certain policy fields. Power still lies in the hands of elected representatives such as councillors. The fact that deliberative instruments are consultative does not mean that they are powerless. In order to make them more sustainable, institutionalization and legal and constitutional bases are necessary.

In order to include them into the process of binding decision-making process, deliberative instruments have to be combined with 'direct democratic instruments' such as referenda and initiatives. The question is how to combine both to overcome certain fallacies in direct and deliberative democracies to connect these participatory instruments ('first talk, then vote'; Goodin, 2008). This combination can reinvigorate local representative democracy and become the future of local governance.

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LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE: ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS

Summary

Political protests are growing in emerging and established democracies. Since the 1970s, the demand for political participation has become obvious. The 1990s saw more open dialogue-oriented participatory instruments, which began to be implemented in some countries ('century of participation'). The proliferation of participatory instruments in the field of talk centric deliberative democracies has been called the 'deliberative turn' (Dryzek, 2002). A new push is also attributed to the open government data, the movement initiated by the US President Obama's government when it set up its open government data initiative in 2009. These include online and offline participation (Kersting, 2013). It is a practice that most new instruments of participation are implemented at the local level. It is frequently argued that these deliberative forums do not lead to binding decisions. However, compared to elections, the number of citizens participating is rather small and selective. New forms of vote-centric direct democracy such as referenda and other initiatives are implemented in some countries. The paper presents a model of offline and online participation. The focus will be on representative and direct democratic participation. Participation in elections and proliferation of referenda and initiatives will be analysed. Participation in these spheres of numeric democracy can lead to binding decisions. Legal frameworks of different European countries is presented and compared. Is the turnout at the local level small and declining? Who is included and who is excluded? In the empirical part, the article predominantly uses the analyses of the latest survey data from representative comparative opinion polls such as the World Value Survey (WVS).

Key words: participation, Internet, referendum, elections, local government

LOKALNA POLITIČKA PARTICIPACIJA U EUROPI: IZBORI I REFERENDUMI

Sažetak

Politički protesti postaju učestaliji i u novim i u starim demokracijama. Od 1970-ih insistiranje na političkoj participaciji postaje očigledno. U nekim su se zemljama tijekom 1990-ih počeli primjenjivati otvoreniji, dijalogu okrenuti participativni instrumenti (stoljeće participacije). Bujanje participativnih instrumenata u na pregovore usredotočenim predstavničkim demokracijama naziva se predstavničkim zaokretom (Dryzek, 2002). Novi trend pripisuje se i otvorenom pristupu državnim podacima, pokretu koji je inicirala vlada američkog predsjednika Obame prilikom pokretanja svoje inicijative za otvoren pristup vladinim podacima 2009. To uključuje participaciju na Internetu i izvan njega (Kersting, 2013). Praksa je da se većina novih instrumenata participacije primjenjuje na lokalnoj razini. Često se prigovara da takvi forumi ne vode do obvezujućih rezultata. U usporedbi s izborima, broj građana koji sudjeluju u takvim forumima vrlo je malen i selektivan. Novi oblici izravne demokracije usmjerene na birače, poput referenduma i drugih inicijativa, primjenjuju se u određenim državama. Rad analizira model participacije putem Interneta i izvan njega. U središtu pozornosti je predstavnička i izravna demokratska participacija. Analizira se sudjelovanje na izborima i bujanje referenduma i drugih inicijativa. Participacija u tim sferama brojčane demokracije može dovesti do obvezujućih rezultata. Prikazuju se i uspoređuju pravni okviri u različitim europskim zemljama. Je li izlaznost na lokalnoj razini mala te smanjuje li se i dalje? Tko je uključen, a tko isključen? U empirijskom dijelu rad se uglavnom koristi analizama najnovijih podataka dobivenih iz komparativnih anketa poput World Value Survey (WVS).

Ključne riječi: participacija, Internet, referendum, izbori, lokalna samouprava